

GUDRUN GERSMANN (PARIS)

## HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED DURING THE LAST DECADE!

### Introduction

As the co-founder of the Internet portal **historicum.net** ([www.historicum.net](http://www.historicum.net)), the co-publisher of the online journals **sehepunkte** ([www.sehepunkte.de](http://www.sehepunkte.de)), **zeitenblicke** ([www.zeitenblicke.de](http://www.zeitenblicke.de)), **Francia** (<http://www.perspectivia.net/content/publikationen/francia>) und **lesepunkte** ([www.lesepunkte.de](http://www.lesepunkte.de)), which are now well established in the specialist community, the organiser of the publication platform **perspectivia.net** ([www.perspectivia.net](http://www.perspectivia.net)) and, last but not least, the initiator of the new website **recensio.net** ([www.recensio.net](http://www.recensio.net)), I have played an active part in the development of electronic publishing in the German-speaking countries in recent years as well as in the debate on open access. Things were far from easy at the outset. I can remember being invited to a conference as a young outside lecturer and greeted with the words: »Ah, here comes the database!« At that time, in the late 1990s, many people in the field had no idea of how quickly the »new media« would change their personal and professional lives. While normality has returned to many areas in the meantime, there are still battles to be waged. The debate about open access, copyright and Google's monopoly, for instance, is by no means over. In fact, this debate is merely a part of a fundamental process of social change which is calling the old familiar models of literary production and reception into question and replacing them with new ones. When I travel on the underground in Paris, I see more and more people using their *iPad*, *iPod touch* or other reading devices to read books and newspapers. The triumphant advance of e-books appears to be unstoppable. At the same time, libraries are taking on a different character. They are developing into »social spaces« which are used more to meet and communicate with other people than to read books and specialist literature.

Taking account of developments over the past ten years, I have divided my presentation today into three parts. A look back at the progress made by electronic publishing in the humanities since the dawn of the new millennium will be followed by an examination of the status quo. In the third part, finally, I will address a number of problems and look at the prospects offered by future developments.

## **I Look back**

<1>

At the start, natural sciences and medicine were very much to the fore in pushing ahead with the development of the latest technology. The concept of globally networked e-science was formulated at an early stage in high energy physics laboratories and by astronomers. However, it is only in the past 15 years or so that the new media have entered the world of the humanities in Germany. Using a PC to write texts, send e-mails, take, store and pass on photos, download bibliographical data or read e-journals is now a part of daily routine for virtually every humanities scholar. And, to be honest, we can now barely imagine a life without Google, Facebook and co. Having said that, special priority programs in the field of e-humanities involving cooperation between representatives of various disciplines, ranging from history to literary studies and archaeology, are still a rare phenomenon in Germany at the moment; they are limited to a handful of universities such as Trier, Cologne, Würzburg and Frankfurt. However, most history seminars – to come back to my own field – do now have ›Internet information literacy‹ included in their courses.

<2>

In contrast to the past, there is now at least recognition of the need to familiarise students with specialised online services.

<3>

A major role in implementing new technology in the humanities continues to be played by the major national funding organisations in Germany. In addition to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research I should like to mention in particular the German Research Foundation, which recognized the importance of the online world for science at an early stage and went on to launch a series of initiatives. Worthy of mention at present is the national licences programme, which gives us free access to a large number of databases and journal archives.

<4>

In the field of electronic publishing the German Research Foundation gave the go-ahead in the 1990s for the setting-up of ›virtual specialist libraries‹ that were explicitly to encompass history, art history and literary studies. The idea behind this was that new useful online services for the humanities could only be developed in association with research organisations and specialist libraries. In my view, this approach has proved its worth up to

the present day, although it appears in the meantime that the original idea of a ›virtual library‹ has increasingly been replaced by the development of ›virtual research environments‹.

<5>

One of the outcomes of funding and of cooperation with the Bavarian State Library in Munich was the setting up for the humanities in the late 1990s of **historicum.net**.

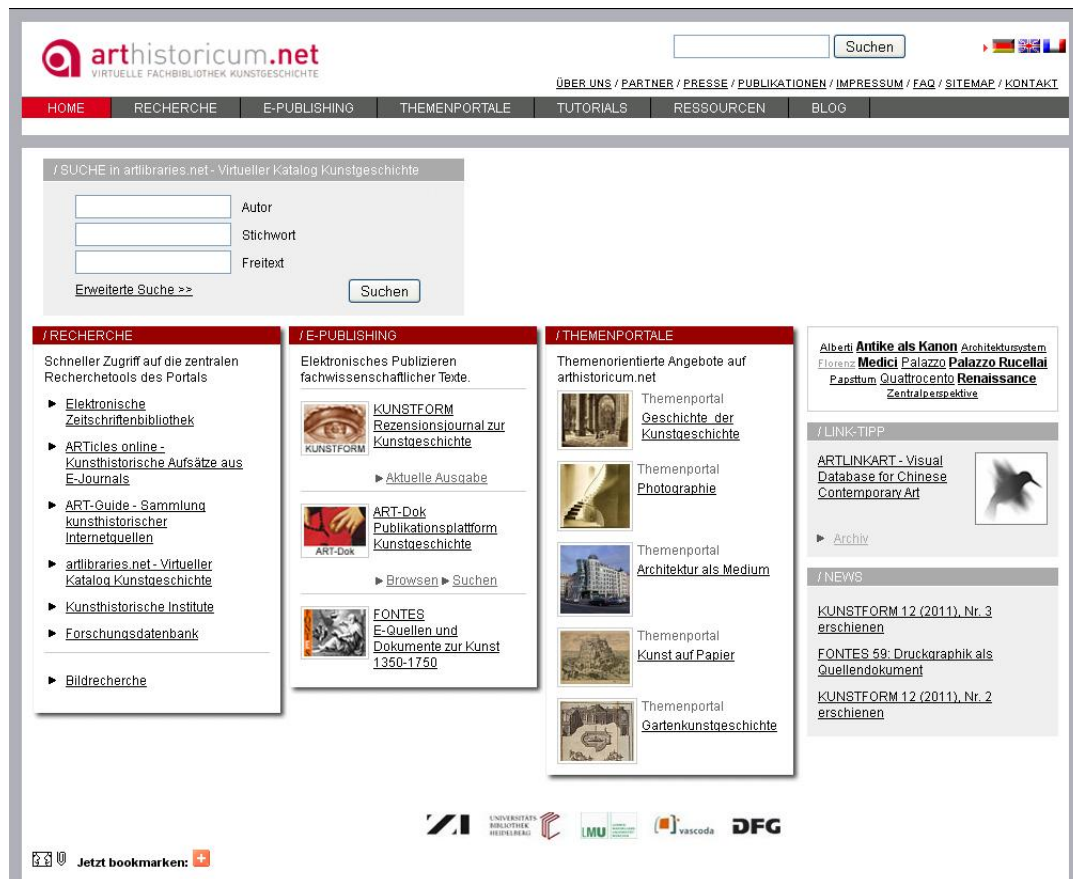


This sees itself as a comprehensive information tool for historians and it continues to be accessible to the general public on the Internet. **Historicum.net** contains thematic material on various historical issues in the form of introductory and in-depth texts. It also has digitized sources, pictorial material, literary references and tutorials. Without wishing to do **historicum.net** down in any way, it could well be described as a ›material pool‹ or

construction kit, which students and teachers are often happy to use, even though it basically has no interactive functions to offer.

<6>


**Historicum.net** served as the model for the launching a few years later of a virtual specialist library for art history called **arthistoricum.net**.



Hubertus Kohle was involved in this launch and he is among the art historians who regularly write blogs and commentaries.

<7>

Despite all the criticism in the early days that these projects would meet a rapid end, these specialist portals not only quickly succeeded in establishing themselves in the academic communities; they also developed into a hub for a whole series of other online services. In the winter of 2001, financial support from the German Research Foundation paved the way for the appearance of the review journal *sehepunkte* (www.sehepunkte.de), the aim of which was to collect information in as systematic a manner as possible on the history and art history book market for every era.



**sehепunkte**  
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**Über sehепunkte**


Der Name sehепunkte für dieses Rezensionjournal ist Programm: Als der Theologe und Historiker Johann Martin Chladenius (1710 - 1791) den ursprünglich aus der Optik stammenden Begriff in seiner 1742 erschienenen Einleitung zur richtigen Auslegung vernünftiger Reden und Schriften auf die Geschichtsschreibung übertrug, vollzog er bekanntlich einen bemerkenswerten Schritt. Denn damit war der "perspektivische Blick des Historikers" umrissen ... [mehr](#)

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**sehепunkte**  
11 (2011), Nr. 3


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*Rezensiert von Johannes Arndt*


 **Helmut Fangerau**: Spinning the scientific web... Jacques Loeb (1859-1924) und sein Programm einer internationalen biomedizinischen Grundlagenforschung, Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2010  
*Rezensiert von Philipp Osten*


**Theorie / Methode / Didaktik:**

 **Anne Kwaschke / Mario Wimmer** (Hg.): Von der Arbeit des Historikers. Ein Wörterbuch zu Theorie und Praxis der Geschichtswissenschaft, Bielefeld: transkript 2010  
*Rezensiert von Detlev Meis*


 **August Ludw. von Schlözer**: Vorbereitung zur Weltgeschichte für Kinder. Ein Buch für Kinderlehrer. Hg. von Marko Demantowsky und Susanne Popp, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2011  
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 **Stephen Hodkinson** (ed.): Sparta. Comparative Approaches, Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales 2009  
*Rezensiert von Mischa Meier*


**Mittelalter:**

 **Casarius von Heisterbach**: Dialogus miraculorum - Dialog über die Wunder. Übersetzt und kommentiert von Nikolaus Höges und Horst Schneides, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers NV 2009  
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 **Matthias Schröer**: Metropolitangewalt und papstgeschichtliche Wende, Hünim: Matthiesen 2009  
*Rezensiert von Franz-Bernd Erkers*


**Frühe Neuzeit:**

 **Yvonne Kleinmann** (Hg.): Kommunikation durch symbolische Akte. Religiöse Heterogenität und politische Herrschaft in Polen-Litauen, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2010  
*Rezensiert von Karin Friedrich*


 **Andrew L. Thomas**: A House Divided. Wittelsbach Confessional Court Cultures in the Holy Roman Empire, c. 1550-1650, Leiden / Boston / Tokyo: Brill Academic Publishers 2010  
*Rezensiert von Josef Johannes Schmid*


**19. Jahrhundert:**

 **Michael Fischer / Christian Senkel** / **Klaus Tanner** (Hg.): Reichsgründung 1871. Ereignis-Beschreibung - Inszenierung, Münster: Waxmann 2010  
*Rezensiert von Matthias Stöckler*


 **Vera Hierholzer**: Nahrung nach Norm. Regulierung von Nahrungsmittelqualität in der Industrialisierung 1871-1914, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2010  
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**Zeitgeschichte:**

 **Jörg Arnold / Dietmar Süß** / **Walter Traill** (Hg.): Luftkrieg. Erinnerungen in Deutschland und Europa, Göttingen: Wallstein 2009  
*Rezensiert von Holger Nehring*

 **Ralf Binner / Bernd Bonwetsch** / **Mark Jung**: Massenmord und Lagerhaft. Die andere Geschichte des Großen Terrors, Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2009  
*Rezensiert von Jürgen Zarusky*

**Kunstgeschichte:**

 **Ralf Boff / Regina Stephan** (Hg.): Joseph Maria Olbrich. 1847-1908. Architekt und Gestalter der frühen Moderne, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz 2010  
*Rezensiert von Stefanie Lieb*




 **Bernd Hebe**: Kampf um Kirchen. Religiöse Gewalt, heiliger Raum und christliche Topographie in Alexandria und Konstantinopel (4. Jh.), Münster: Aschendorff 2010  
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**Nächste Ausgabe**

Die nächste Ausgabe erscheint am 15. April 2011

**VG WORT**

Aktuelle Informationen zur Einbeziehung der Rezensionen in das Meldungsverfahren der VG Wort finden Sie [hier](#).

ISSN 1868-9559 (Print) / ISSN 1868-9567 (Online) / [www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net](#)



The name of the journal, *sehepunkte*, was not chosen by accident. In applying the concept of ›sehepunkte‹ – originally found in optics – to the writing of history the theologian and historian, Johann Martin Chladenius, laid the ground in the 1740s for an understanding of the subjective nature of any perception or interpretation of historical events.

<8>

Eleven editions of *sehepunkte* have been published annually since December 2001; each edition, issued on the 15th of every month, now contains between 80 and 100 book reviews. Particularly successful just recently have been the ›forums‹ devoted to special thematic matters, which enable readers to address specific topical issues in their fields. One of the categories in which publications are issued at regular intervals is *Islamic Worlds*. Here we cooperate with Stephan Conermann, an Orientalist from Bonn, in presenting a selection of new publications on Islamic studies to a broad audience. For years now, *sehepunkte* has enjoyed working relations no less productive than that in the field of Islamic studies with many voluntary special editors and with the staff at the Munich Institute of Contemporary History they propose reviews of books relevant to contemporary history and are responsible for the quality of the reviews that are ›acquired‹.

<9>


Given that an online review journal a) can react faster to new publications than its print equivalent, b) neatly handles the notorious problems of space confronting a print journal and c) profits in a very special way from the media potential of the Internet, there was never any real question about the sense or purpose of installing such a publication on the Internet. A more controversial issue was the founding of the online history journal *zeitenblicke* (www.zeitenblicke.de), which met with critical questions from fellow specialists in the field, such as: Do we need yet another specialist journal at a time when so much is already being published? And especially one that is only available in electronic form?



Given the advantages deriving from presentation on the Internet, however, most of the critics were easily convinced of the benefits *zeitenblicke* had to offer. As an electronic journal it enables sources, links and images to be embedded in the articles in various levels of zoom and resolution. It also offers readers commentary functions. Last but not least, the professional furnishing of the articles with metadata and their integration into library OPACs gives the authors a visibility that is beyond the reach of print publications. The texts can easily be found anywhere in the world using major search engines such as Google.

<10>

Like most e-journals, however, *zeitenblicke* also has to wrestle with a wide variety of problems. That applies, in particular, to the handling of image rights, which occasionally hold up a publication. Then there is the question of the long-term financing of the open access journal, which requires a considerable outlay in terms of personnel and material. Prior to publication on the Internet, texts have to be assessed, formally processed and fed into the content management system. That is followed by online proof-reading and further correspondence with authors. Seed financing and individual funding schemes enable the personnel resources for the launch of a new journal to be acquired relatively quickly, but what is the longer-term picture like, when the financial godsend from the funding institutions runs out and the ›on-board resources‹ of the publishers involved are exhausted? The German open access platform ([www.openaccess-germany.de](http://www.openaccess-germany.de)) provides room for discussion of different models for financing journals.



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28.03.2011

Helmholtz-Zentren fördern Open Access-Zeitschrift NJO  
26.03.2011

Open Access-Tage 2011 am 4. und 5. Oktober  
23.03.2011

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22.03.2011

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Open Access ist ein sehr aktuelles und zukunftsweisendes Thema, das weltweit große Unterstützung findet. Gründe für Open Access sind unter anderem die erhöhte Sichtbarkeit und damit die erhöhte Wirksamkeit wissenschaftlicher Texte. Andererseits werden eine Reihe von Vorbehalten gegen Open Access geäußert, z.B. bezüglich der Richtigkeit und mangelnden Auffindbarkeit digitaler Daten.

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Only the years to come will reveal which of these models proves realistic in practice. The period of experimentation in electronic publishing is far from over! There are, indeed, many indications that cooperation with publishing houses in electronic publishing in the humanities is both conceivable and meaningful. Last year, in particular, relations between publishing houses and open access publishers in Germany were marked by mutual polemics and, at times, were at a very low ebb because of the debate unleashed by the Heidelberger Edition researcher, Roland Reuß, in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. However, my impression is that in the meantime many publishing houses themselves see the need for cooperation.

<11>

Another offspring, which saw the light of day in October 2006, is the journal *Isepunkte* (www.isepunkte.de), which focuses on a very special group of recipients: children and young adults.

**Isepunkte**  
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**NEWS**

26.01.2011  
**Tagungsankündigung: 25./26. März 2011, Universität zu Köln**  
Der Kinder- und Jugendbuchmarkt boomt. Wie passt dieser Befund zur beklagten Bildungsmisere? In einer Tagung, die sich v.a. an LehrerInnen, Lehramtsstudierende und -anwärterInnen richtet, fragen wir danach, wie schulische Kompetenzen mit Jugendbüchern gefördert werden können, ohne dabei die Leselust zu vermiesen.

26.01.2011  
**Neue Ausgabe der Isepunkte**  
Alle Geschichte einmal anders: Ein Sachbuch über die historischen Fakten in Asterix-Comics und ein Roman über ein Pferderrennen im antiken Rom zeigen Dir, wie der Alltag im Imperium Romanum aussah. Außer den Buchbesprechungen findest Du auch wieder eine aktuelle Hör- und Leseprobe.

26.01.2011  
**Autorin im Profil: Maren Gottschalk**  
Beim Schreiben von Biographien kommt man Menschen manchmal näher als es einem lieb ist. Diese Erfahrung hat die Autorin und Journalistin Maren Gottschalk gemacht. Wie sie sich dem Leben von Persönlichkeiten wie der Schriftstellerin Astrid Lindgrén nähert und was sie von klassischer Schullektüre hält, erfährst Du im Interview...

26.01.2011  
**Freistil**  
Gleich drei Ausstellungen besprechen rückblickend die Schüler einer Münchener Kunst AG in der Rubrik "Freistil". Die pointierten Texte handeln von den Installationen des belgischen Künstlers David Claerbout, von mutmaßlichen "Höhepunkten" der Schweizer Kunst und von islamischer Kunst zwischen Tradition und Zukunft.

26.01.2011  
**Gewinnspiel**  
Das Buch "Die Farben meiner Seele. Die Lebensgeschichte der Frida Kahlo" (Beltz & Gelberg 2010) von Maren Gottschalk kannst Du gewinnen, wenn Du die folgende Frage beantworten kannst: In welchem Land wurde die Malerin Frida Kahlo geboren? Chile, Argentinien oder Mexiko?

18.04.2010  
**Linktipps: Kunstgeschichtsspiel online**  
Kunstgeschichte spielerisch betreiben – und trotzdem dabei lernen: Das ist die Idee, die hinter der Anwendung steckt, zu der wir Dich hier einladen möchten. „Artigo“ wurde vom Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München entwickelt. Phantasie, Einfallsreichtum und ein bisschen Wissen sind gefragt....

17.04.2010  
**In eigener Sache**  
Die Isepunkte freuen sich über finanzielle Unterstützung! Einmalige Spenden sind möglich, aber auch die Mitgliedschaft in unserem Verein „historium.net – Geschichtswissenschaften im Internet e.V.“. Damit werden dann auch unsere Projekte historium.net, zeitenblicke und sehpunkte unterstützt.

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The journal's sub-title – ›Pupils write for pupils‹ – outlines briefly and succinctly the purpose, the players and the addressees of the new publication: pupils between the ages of 9 and 18 who – under the supervision of their teachers – use *lesepunkte* to discuss works of non-fiction on history or art history as well as novels for young people, films or museum programmes. During the first 10 months of the existence of *lesepunkte*, over 150 schools – mostly in Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia but also in other federal states – were recruited for the project, which aims to try out new ways of working online. In contrast to *sehpunkte* and *zeitenblicke*, which in terms of the editorial work involved as well as their presentation and appearance are still very much modelled on traditional print journals, *lesepunkte* is also conceived as a workshop for free, collaborative writing processes. A wiki attached to the editorially supervised section, for example, gives participants a chance to discuss their texts among themselves as well as to comment on and change them.

<12>

What is the attitude of humanities scholars to electronic publications? Where is resistance still encountered? What expectations are there of an online publication? To find out what our fellow specialists expect we prepared a questionnaire some time ago in conjunction with the projects I referred to earlier. The intention was to ascertain the interests and wishes of researchers in their role as authors and publishers. The questionnaires were sent to the heads of various special humanities research units and projects. While those that were returned did not supply any statistically utilizable results, they nonetheless provided an interesting sense of mood.

<13>

The outcome of the survey can be summarised as follows. Large numbers of historians no longer have any fundamental reservations about electronic publishing. On the contrary, most researchers – and especially junior researchers – are only too willing to have their work published electronically. In contrast to the situation with print publications, which often take years to produce in a publishing house and frequently only appear in limited editions, the researchers' hope is that electronic publications will give them faster and greater visibility in their field. The junior researchers surveyed repeatedly referred to the considerable attractiveness of online publications, particularly with respect to application procedures. In the field of reviews, journals and conference proceedings, too, online publications are now obviously well established and form an integral part of specialist publications. Nevertheless, the respondents set great store by adherence to quality standards. There were repeated demands that electronic texts should undergo a peer review and that a guarantee be given of

their long-term availability. However, online journals in the humanities have one serious handicap as compared to print journals. Since they do not have an impact factor, there are considerable worries that online publications count for nothing in application procedures. Here again, we will have to wait and see how the debate on the furnishing of online journals with impact factors develops.

<14>

On the one hand, online publications are considered to be a good and economical alternative to print publications. On the other hand, most fellow specialists show no inclination to become active themselves on the Internet, for instance as bloggers or critical commentators. In my view, we are still a long way away from the ›networked humanities‹ that have been invoked here at this conference. For the most part the use of Internet publications is still limited to what one might call passive consumption in private. A playfully active approach to texts on the Internet continues to be viewed with mistrust. There is obviously still a great fear of being looked at askance by other experts as a result of quick, pointed and sometimes perhaps even ›flippant‹ commentaries posted on the Internet.

## **II The present: a look at the status quo**

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Taking all this into account, it comes as no surprise that online humanities journals are still basically little more than print journals transposed to an electronic medium. Although the benefits of an Internet publication, such as the possibility of rapid global availability, are exploited, no use is made at all of the potential offered by online writing or, indeed, of collaborative writing.

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To give you an illustration of what I mean let me take *Francia*, the journal issued by our institute in Paris, as an example.

The screenshot shows the website **perspectivia.net** with a navigation bar at the top containing links like 'startseite', 'institute & partner', 'publikationen & dokumentationen', 'quellen & datenbanken', and 'suche'. Below the navigation bar, there is a sidebar on the left with a list of links including 'Arbeitskreis Deutsche England-Forschung', 'Beihefte der Francia', 'Beiruter Texte und Studien', 'discussions', 'Einzelveröffentlichungen des DHI Warschau', 'Francia-Online', 'Francia-Retro', 'Francia-Recensio', 'Friedrich 300 - Colloquien', 'Friedrich 300 - Quellen', 'Friedrich 300 - Studien und Vorträge', 'Geisteswissenschaft im Dialog', 'German Historical Institute London Bulletin', 'Joachim-Lelawel-Gespräche des DHI Warschau', 'Monographien Moskawi - Monographien Moskau', 'Pera-Blätter', 'Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken', 'Quellen und Studien (DHI Warschau)', 'обзор зарубежной историографии - Recensio Moskau', 'Sektionen', 'Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin Brandenburg. Jahrbuch', and 'ГИИИ: Доклады по истории 18 века - DHI Moskau: Vorträge zum 18. und 19. Jahrhundert'. The main content area is titled 'Francia' and 'Francia-Online'. It contains a paragraph in German describing the journal's history and online availability, followed by a paragraph in French. Below this, there are two sections: 'Francia-Retro' and 'Francia-Recensio'. The 'Francia-Retro' section mentions the journal's founding in 1973 and its online availability. The 'Francia-Recensio' section mentions the journal's online availability. On the right side of the page, there is a 'Website durchsuche' search bar and a 'NACHRICHTEN' (News) section with a table of recent news items.

NACHRICHTEN	
DHI Moskau: Vorträge zum 18. und 19. Jahrhundert (9)	02.05.2011
DHI Rom: QFIAB 89 (2009)	28.04.2011
Geisteswissenschaft im Dialog 6-8	28.04.2011
DHI Warschau: Lelawel-Gespräche 3/2011	07.04.2011
DHI Paris: Francia-Recensio 2011/1	07.04.2011
Weitere Nachrichten...	

*Francia* was founded in 1973 and over the past three years it has undergone a thorough overhaul. In the process, *Francia* has been transformed from a purely print journal into a hybrid journal with both an online and a print section. While essays continue to be published in a print edition, we have shifted all the reviews to the online edition. Book reviews are published four times a year online in open access.

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The realignment of *Francia* has gone hand in hand with a retro-digitization project undertaken jointly with the Thorbecke-Verlag publishing house and the Bavarian State Library in Munich. Since November 2008 all the sets of back numbers of *Francia* for the years 1973 to 2006 have been available online free of charge for everybody. With the help of a two-year ›moving walk‹ all the future editions will be successively digitized and made available to researchers.

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While the institute in Paris wanted to give the journal greater ›visibility‹, that was not the only reason for the rigorous restructuring of the familiar publication channels. High up on our list of considerations were the Francophone researchers in countries with a poor library infrastructure who are glad to be able to download specialist texts free of charge from the Internet. Our initiative met with a broad positive response. Almost all the over 1,000 *Francia* authors whom we asked for permission to reprint their articles before publishing them online welcomed and supported the initiative. Only one reviewer – a 90-year-old gentleman – politely requested to be spared any requests for reviews in the future. At his age he no longer saw any prospect of him learning to use a computer!

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Given the positive response we have received, we are planning to join forces once again with the Centre for Electronic Publishing (ZEP) of the Bavarian State Library in the years ahead to carry out the retro-digitization of other series of publications issued by the German Historical Institute, such as the *Beihefte der Francia*, the *Instrumenta* and *Pariser historische Studien*. They will subsequently be published on [www.perspectivia.net](http://www.perspectivia.net), the institutional repository of the institutes grouped together in the Foundation of German Humanities Institutes Abroad.

anmelden



startseite | institute & partner | publikationen & dokumentationen | quellen & datenbanken | suche |

vous êtes ici: -> startseite

Website durchsuchen

Erweiterte Suche...



NACHRICHTEN

DHI Moskau: Vorträge zum 18. und 19. Jahrhundert (9)  
02.05.2011

DHI Rom: QFIAB 89 (2009)  
28.04.2011

Geisteswissenschaft im Dialog 6-8  
28.04.2011

DHI Warschau: Lelewel-Gespräche 3/2011  
07.04.2011

DHI Paris: Francia-Recensio 2011/1  
07.04.2011

Weitere Nachrichten...

Willkommen auf *perspectivia.net*



Willkommen auf *perspectivia.net*, der internationalen, epochenübergreifenden Online-Publikationsplattform für die Institute der „Stiftung Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland“ (DGIA) und ihre Kooperationspartner. Anliegen von *perspectivia.net* ist es, ausgewählte wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse der Auslandsinstitute barrierefrei zugänglich zu machen: Auf der Basis des Open-Access-Prinzips soll die wissenschaftliche Kommunikation weiterentwickelt und intensiviert werden.

*perspectivia.net* bietet sowohl genuin elektronische Publikationen, als auch Retrodigitalisate bereits gedruckt erschienener Schriften an. In stetig wachsender Zahl sind Zeitschriften, Rezensionen, Monographien und Tagungsdokumentationen volltextdurchsuchbar und größtenteils bibliothekarisch erschlossen über *perspectivia.net* abrufbar.

Versenden — Drucken —

Profil

Für Nutzer

DGIA

Impressum

Kontakt

Links



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Although *Francia* has been successfully restructured and is regarded benevolently by the journal's ›regular customers‹, there is no escaping the realisation, if we take a critical view of things, that – like the publishers of other online specialist journals – we have not even begun to tap into the potential offered by electronic presentation and publication. There can be no talk yet in this context of collaborative writing processes. The process of publishing the *Francia* reviews is much too conservative for that. The content management system we use for reviews is not accessed directly by the authors but via a member of staff at the institute, who is simultaneously responsible for the correct handling of the assessment process. While we permit readers' commentaries, we do not publish them straightaway but wait until an editorial check has been carried out. This helps us to ensure the quality of *Francia* as a publication, but it does nothing to liven up the texts! Under such conditions a discussion between the reviewer/author and the reader is largely ruled out.

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Is there an alternative, a counter-model to ›traditional‹ journals like *Francia*? I would say: yes, there is. In my opinion we are currently at a crossroads. Day by day we are confronted with users who, as digital natives, come from a culture whose laws and codes of conduct differ from those in the classical world of the humanities. The best example of the incipient changes in our use of the media is the success of *Wikipedia*. The Internet encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* has come to symbolize a dynamic, collective knowledge store compiled on a voluntary basis with the help of self-organized systems. At the same time, *Wikipedia* provides an exemplary illustration of collective, networked knowledge generation based on the principle of ›swarm intelligence‹ or the ›wisdom of many‹. In the case of *Wikipedia*, collective writing is not just invoked in theory but also put to the test in practice. In contrast to classical specialist journals, in which experts raised their voices and acted as opinion formers, the people who write for *Wikipedia* no longer attach any importance to their individual authorship. This is reflected not least in their renunciation of any mention of their own names. Most of the authors use made-up names, although that should not be construed as a lack of seriousness. The team of observers ensures that these cover-up tactics do not lead to any misuse of texts: a *Wikipedia* article does not need any prior peer review procedure. The *Wikipedia* community ensures that errors do not remain on the Internet for long. Every *Wikipedia* author is obliged from the very beginning to accept a kind of voluntary self-control. Among the most important tools used by Wikipedians are special lists, which enable a close watch to be kept on particularly interesting or vandalism-prone articles – anything to do with Nazi history, for example. In addition, changes made by newcomers are not visible to the

reader immediately but only after they have been looked at by an experienced author. Studies made of the quality of *Wikipedia* articles have given the *Wikipedia* project fairly good marks. Although – or perhaps precisely because – there is a lack of any traditional quality assurance mechanisms and although experts, who are normally so much in demand in the humanities as elsewhere, play no role whatsoever, the articles that appear are by no means inferior to those in comparable encyclopaedias produced in accordance with traditional criteria. The principle of ›control by a group‹, which ideally is well networked, carefully observes the installation of every single text on *Wikipedia* and responds immediately if problems are spotted, seems to work quite well.

### III Prospects for the future

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What might new forms of collaborative writing look like? What publications are conceivable under the general heading of ›networked humanities‹? In Munich we are currently in the process of developing a major project funded by the German Research Foundation under the heading **recensio.net** (www.recensio.net), which is moving in exactly this direction.

The screenshot shows the homepage of recensio.net, a platform for European historical scholarship. The layout includes a top navigation bar with links for 'Anmelden', 'Registrieren', and a search function. Below this is a main banner with the word 'rezensieren' (reviews) and a grid of featured content. The featured content is organized into four columns: 'Neueste Rezensionsteile online' (Latest review sections online), 'Neueste Rezensionen online' (Latest reviews online), 'Neueste Präsentationen von Monographien und Aufsätzen' (Latest presentations of monographs and essays), and 'Neueste Präsentationen von Internetressourcen' (Latest presentations of internet resources). Each column lists recent publications and reviews. On the right side, there is a section titled 'Auf recensio.net ...' (On recensio.net ...) which describes the platform's purpose and includes a 'Newsletter RSS-Feed' button. The footer contains information about the project's funding by the DFG (German Research Foundation) and lists the participating institutions: BSB (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek), DHP (Deutsches Historisches Projekt), IHA (Institut für Europäische Geschichte), and the Institut für Europäische Geschichte.

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On the one hand, **recensio.net** has a ›classical component‹ in that it ›collects‹, as it were, the reviews published in regional and national historical journals and makes them available online.

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From our point of view, however, the more important and innovative aspect of **recensio.net** is what you might call a ›Web 2.0‹ idea. In contrast to *Francia*, the intention is to actively incorporate authors and readers into the publication and commentary process. We very much hope to be able to offer ›living texts‹. Authors of dissertations, for example, can ›self-announce‹ their books on **recensio.net**. The idea is not to provide a platform for ›self-advertising‹, but space for a brief, form-like presentation of the core propositions. The plan is that readers should then first directly comment on or criticise these presentations in brief or at length. In a discussion forum of this kind we envisage the author as being not merely an ›object‹, but also in a position to provide feedback himself on the remarks made by the readers, so that – ideally – a genuine debate can unfold on propositions and findings.

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**Recensio.net** is an experiment. We are well aware of the many reservations that still exist concerning interactive and collaborative concepts. However, we are convinced that this method of ›reviewing‹, which has long become well established outside the purely academic book market, harbours potential for the reasons I have given.

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An additional aspect, offering a clear ›value-added‹, will be that authors will be able to present not only monographs on the platform, but also essays they have published in anthologies or journals. This is an attempt to help counteract the typical ›anthology review‹, which has always been problematical in that it seldom really deals with issues at the individual essay level, although academic debates often take place precisely at the anthology, i.e. essay level.

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By way of a brief concluding summary of my article I should like to formulate two propositions. What I have had to say so far is certainly ambivalent. A look at e-journals and portals in the humanities shows, on the one hand, how strong the presence of the ›old world‹ of print publications still is in terms of implementation and use even in the ›new electronic

world«. On the other hand, the ›success story« of Wikipedia and other similarly designed projects shows that we are still deeply involved in a process of change. The interest that new Web 2.0 initiatives like **recensio.net** have met with – particularly on the part of junior researchers – could be a sign that the generation of ›digital natives« is no longer content to passively consume Internet publications, which is still largely the case at present, but is rather prepared to embrace the opportunities and the risks offered by collaborative working.

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In the long term, I feel, this will result in more than a coexistence of two different sets of writing and reception habits on the Internet. In my opinion, the idea and practice of ›collaborative writing« will have a very considerable impact on the understanding of academic research that we have had hitherto. In contrast to earlier times the production, distribution and reception of specialized knowledge will, firstly, no longer be understood solely as the task of recognized experts and prominent individual scholars who can claim authority in their discipline by dint of their academic merits. To put it bluntly, the traditional system of a handful of established, authoritative specialist journals, in which the ›VIPs« in the field presented their articles and new editions were eagerly awaited, has had its day. The reason for this is that the judgment of experts has now been joined – if not replaced, indeed – by a democratic process of opinion forming that will gradually claim ever more space and put its stamp on mutual communication. The consequences of this process of transformation for the self-image of the humanities will require investigation in greater depth, but it is my firm conviction that we are talking here about a genuine revolution. The hierarchically structured ›vertical communication« of the past will be replaced by a ›horizontal, fluid communication«, in which academic laymen and experts stand side by side on an equal footing. The logic behind Wikipedia is very persuasive. Why should only a 60-year-old full professor of history be allowed to write articles for an encyclopaedia? Is not a local historian, who has taken a keen interest in the history of his village over many years, better qualified to publish articles about it? Wikipedia sets great store by both. Value is attached to the academic, who writes excellent articles on matters to do with his specialist field, as well as to the enthusiastic amateur, who shows a painstaking love of detail in writing about areas for which no academic training is required. No greater importance is attached to the texts of the one than to the texts of the other.

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Recent months have shown that, after a hesitant beginning, more and more debates and articles are being published in mailing lists and blogs – and no longer in the specialist journals. From my point of view, a mailing list like H Soz Kult now has a greater degree of interpretative power in the field of history than any monograph or specialist journal.

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Ultimately, this will also raise the question in the long term of the role of professors. In a few years from now we may have to address this issue at a follow-up conference on the ›networked humanities‹!

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Co-editor of e-journals: [www.sehepunkte.de](http://www.sehepunkte.de); [www.zeitenblicke.de](http://www.zeitenblicke.de); [www.recensio.net](http://www.recensio.net); [www.historicum.net](http://www.historicum.net); [www.lesepunkte.de](http://www.lesepunkte.de).

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